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Project Title

To what extent is the censorship of historically controversial symbols (those associated with National Socialism) justified or beneficial in modern educational, gaming, or media contexts?

Declaration

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA in Computer Games Design, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

April 16th, 2026

Certificate of Authenticity

**This dissertation is a product of my own work and is not the
result of anything done in collaboration.**

**I declare that the work in this dissertation has not been and is
not being submitted for any other degree.**

**I agree that this dissertation may be available for reference or
photocopy at the discretion of the University of Wales Trinity
Saint David.**

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jared W. Nickerson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'W'.

Date: April 16th, 2026

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1:1 Hook

In Video Games set during the Second World War, game developers often face a challenging balancing act. Any attempt to censor, replace or remove National Socialist Symbols often produces the opposite of the intended effect; online discussions regarding politics, often spiral into accusations of glorification, or historical revisionism, whilst the very act of suppression can also make the symbols more intriguing to certain audiences. However, at the same time, unfiltered historical accuracy risks being accused of harbouring a platform for politically extreme ideologies. This tension sits at the very heart of this dissertation question: To what extent is the censorship of historically controversial symbols (those associated with National Socialism) justified or beneficial in modern educational, gaming, or media contexts?

This dissertation investigates the question through a practice-led approach combining critical analysis of two game titles, one movie, and one military parade, along with propaganda reels and an analysis of online discourse habits, alongside a 3D Modelled 1:1 replica scene in Unreal Engine 5 of a 1930s Berlin Street leading to the Brandenburg Gate.

1:2 Broad Context

Shortly after the Second World War, symbols associated with The National Socialist German Workers Party, or in German, *Die Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP from now on) - most notably the Swastika, SS Runes, Sonnenrad, the NSDAP eagle, and the Totenkopf acquired a singular status in Western culture. These symbols were originally adopted by the NSDAP as emblems of racial ideology [1], rampant militarism, and totalitarianism between 1933 and 1945. The symbols became indelibly linked to the Holocaust, expansionism, and the deaths of tens of millions. In the following decades since 1945, Germany and many other countries have enacted strict legal and cultural prohibitions on their public display.

German Law §86a of the Strafgesetzbuch for example [2], criminalises the use of these symbols except in the contexts of arts, education, research, and historical documentation. Similarly, sensitivities arose and continue to influence global content policies; video game rating sites (PEGI, and ESRB), digital gaming platforms (Steam, Epic Games, Xbox, PlayStation) and many other major studios continuously encourage or require the replacement, censorship, or removal of National Socialist iconography to avoid accusations of Glorifying Extremist Ideologies.

In the field of Computer Games Design, it creates a persistent dilemma. Historical accuracy demands an accurate representation of the visualities of the period. Yet, interactive media such as video games, places the player in an active embodied role of rank-and-file Wehrmacht soldiers – a position which is fundamentally different from that of a passive viewer of documentaries or films. This is where the core question arises over whether such symbols should be censored, replaced, or removed entirely.

This dissertation therefore addresses the question of whether such censorship is justified or beneficial by examining existing media practices and original practice-led contribution.

1:3 Research Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the censorship, replacement or removal of National Socialist iconography – such as replacing the Swastika or SS runes with the Iron Cross achieves its goals of preventing Glorification in modern media.

This dissertation specifically aims:

To gather and analyse public, academic, and expert opinions on the modification or removal of National Socialist iconography;

To assess whether these modifications successfully reduce glorification of politically extreme ideologies or instead produce unintended consequences – such as increased historical confusion, or misleading representations of the past;

To evaluate whether these changes distort or preserve the historical meaning.

The objectives are:

To collect opinions from a range of sources, on the ethical and practical outcomes of these symbol alterations;

To identify better recommendations for balancing historical accuracy with ethics in games design and media.

1:4 Practical Work Brief

As the central practice-led contribution, this dissertation presents a 1:1 digital replica of a 1930s National Socialist Berlin Street leading up to the Brandenburg Gate. Using Autodesk Maya for 3D modelling, Adobe Substance Painter for texturing, and Unreal Engine 5 for the compilation of all assets into a final scene, this work recreates the street scene with historical accuracy. The designs of which are informed by the monumental strategies of Reich Architect Albert Speer, purposefully emphasising the overwhelming scale of stone architecture and the ubiquitous presence of National Socialist iconography. In doing so, this environment seeks to induce an experience of totalitarian power and individual insignificance, offering an uncensored, non-interactive scene in which the effects of contextual historical representation can be critically evaluated.

1:5 Roadmap

This dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter 2, reviews relevant literature of National Socialist iconography, censorship laws, and theoretical perspectives such as Reductio ad Hitlerum, Reductio ad Absurdum, Godwin's Law of Nazi Analogies, the Streisand Effect, and Reactance Theory. It also examines perceived Double Standards in applications of censorship contrasting the treatment of symbols of the NSDAP compared to the Communist Hammer and Sickle and explores this through the lenses of Victor's Justice and the selective criminalisation of historical denial, for example, the relative neglect of similar atrocities such as The Great Leap Forward and the Holodomor.

Chapter 3 presents case studies of two existing game titles, one film, propaganda reels, and modern military uniform choices, with inconsistencies in commercial titles such as *Call of Duty: WWII*.

Chapter 4 covers the methodology employed in the creation of my final artifact 1:1 replica of a 1930s Berlin Street leading up to the Brandenburg Gate using Autodesk Maya, Adobe Substance Painter and Unreal Engine 5.

Chapter 5 analyses the completed artifact in terms of historical accuracy and its visual impact; there will also be comments on issues encountered and solutions to said issues.

Chapter 6 delivers a nuanced answer to the research question and evaluates the extent of which the practical work addresses the research question, drawing from the theoretical framework and case studies.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation, and it will also discuss the limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2:1 Historical Context and Legal Frameworks

Today, the Swastika, SS runes, Sonnenrad, and Totenkopf are the most heavily regulated symbols in Western culture, however their history reveals a far more complex tale. The Swastika originated as a religious and auspicious emblem. It has been used for over 5000 years in Hinduism (see Figure 2.1), Buddhism (see Figure 2.2), and Jainism (see Figure 2.3) to signify prosperity, good fortune, and the cycle of life [3]. Similar emblems appear in Native American, ancient European, and East Asian culture. In the late 19th and early 20th century the symbol appeared in European Military and popular culture; the Finnish Air Force (see Figure 2.4) adopted this symbol as its insignia in 1918 which has been retained until 2017 [4]. Whilst the Russian Imperial Army and early Soviet forces (see Figure 2.5) used it as a good luck charm on currency, badges, and insignia [5] before the rise of the NSDAP (see Figure 2.6).

The Swastika in Hinduism (Figure 2.1) [6]:



The Swastika in Buddhism (Figure 2.2) [7]:



The Swastika in Jainism (Figure 2.3) [8]:



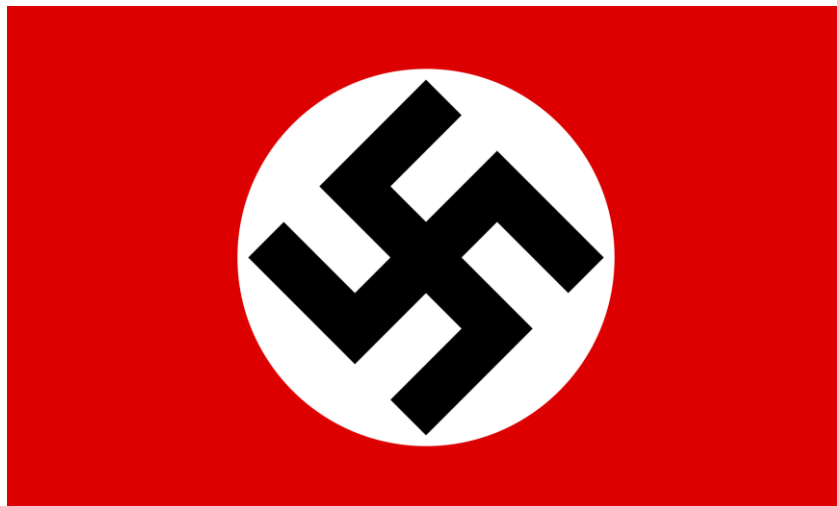
The Swastika used by the Finnish Air Force (Figure 2.4) [9]:



The Swastika used by the Soviets (Figure 2.5) [10]:



The Swastika used by the NSDAP (Figure 2.6) [11]:

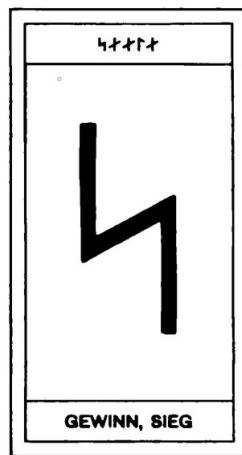


The SS runes (see Figure 2.7) however, have a narrower and a more overtly occult origin. The “Sig” (Victory) runes (see Figure 2.8) were popularised in the early 20th Century by the völkisch mystic Guido von List [12] and later adopted by NSDAP Politician and 4th Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler for the Waffen Schutzstaffel (Waffen-SS (see Figure 2.9)) as a symbol of Elite Aryan identity.

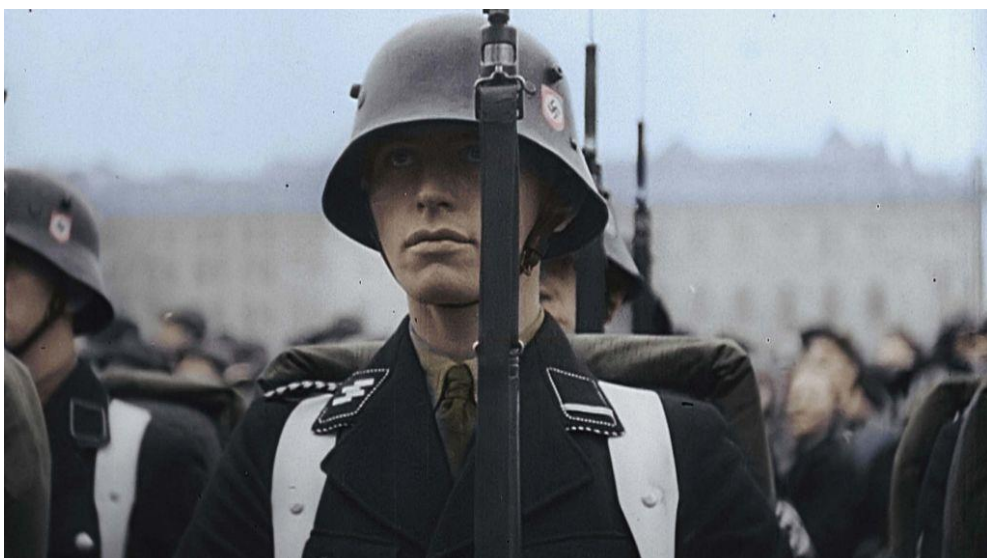
SS runes (Figure 2.7) [13]:



Sig rune (Figure 2.8) [14]:

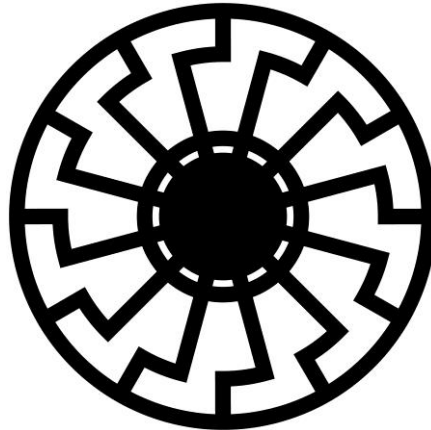


Waffen-SS (Figure 2.9) [15]:



The Sonnenrad (Black Sun (see Figure 2.10)) originates from a 12th century mosaic floor in Wewelsburg Castle (see Figure 2.11). Heinrich Himmler turned this into an SS spiritual centre [16]. The National Socialists never widely used the Sonnenrad as an emblem, however the symbol got adopted by neo-Nazi groups post-war as a potent signifier.

The Sonnenrad (Figure 2.10) [17]:



The Sonnenrad in Wewelsburg Castle (Figure 2.11) [18]:



The Totenkopf (Death's Head (see Figure 2.12)), a skull and crossbones emblem, originated in Medieval and Renaissance art, appearing on tombs, paintings and jewellery as a core *Memento Mori* (remember that you must die) motif. Pirates adopted the skull and crossbones emblem as the iconic Jolly Roger flag (see Figure 2.13) during the Golden Age of Piracy which served as a psychological weapon and a terrifying ultimatum "Surrender or Die". The first reliably documented use of the emblem was by a French Pirate named Emanuel Wynne in 1700. The Totenkopf became a formal

military insignia in the Prussian army under Frederick the Great and was used in 18th century hussar regiments (see Figure 2.14) as a symbol of fearlessness. The symbol was then appropriated by the Freikorps Paramilitary units (see Figure 2.15) after 1918 in the chaotic Weimar Republic period. The Schutzstaffel then adopted this symbol as its main insignia which was used primarily by its concentration-camp units - the SS-*Totenkopfverbände* (Death's Head Units (see Figure 2.16)) as a symbol of ruthless loyalty to Hitler, honour, and fearlessness [19].

The Totenkopf (Figure 2.12) [19]:



Jolly Roger flag (Figure 2.13) [19]:



The Totenkopf on a fur busby in full Hussar uniform (Figure 2.14) [19]:



The Totenkopf used by the Freikorps (Figure 2.15) [19]:



Panzerwagen in den Straßen der Reichshauptstadt.

Heinrich Himmler, Supreme Leader of the SS-Totenkopfverbände (Figure 2.16) [20]:



Following the defeat of Germany in 1945, the Allied powers denazification programmes and the Nuremberg Trials established these symbols as emblems of genocide and totalitarianism. Many countries - Primarily European countries, enacted strict legal prohibitions on these symbols. The strictest laws remain in Germany, where §86a of the Strafgesetzbuch (Criminal Code) bans the public use of “Symbols of unconstitutional organisations” [2] except for clearly defined artistic, scientific, educational, or historic purposes. Internationally, video game rating sites (PEGI, ESRB), and digital platforms (Steam, Epic Games, Xbox, PlayStation) strongly encourage or require the alteration, censorship, or complete removal of these symbols to avoid accusations of glorification or to comply with regional laws. In the context of computer games design, it presents a consistent and distinctive challenge. Interactive environments allow the player to embody and navigate these spaces containing these symbols - which is vastly different from passively observing films, literature, or animation. Therefore, developers frequently self-censor or use asset replacement strategies, even in regions outside of Germany. These studies form the practical backdrop from which this study’s 1:1 historical replication is positioned.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives and Symbol Suppression

Whilst the legal and historical frameworks described above provide a clear reasoning for the restriction of National Socialist symbols, a growing psychological and rhetorical theory suggests that suppression of such symbols can produce unintended consequences and counterproductive outcomes. In modern media, and gaming contexts, where these symbols are not only displayed but encountered by players, four key theoretical concepts are particularly intriguing; Reductio ad Hitlerum, Godwin's Law, the Streisand Effect, and Reactance Theory. These concepts demonstrate how attempts to sanitize historically controversial symbols can stifle rational discourse and unintentionally increase public curiosity.

2.2.1 Reductio ad Hitlerum

The theory Reductio ad Hitlerum, which is also known as "Playing the Nazi card" or "a Reduction to Hitler" is a fallacy which was formalised by a philosopher known as Leo Strauss in 1953 [21]. This fallacy occurs when an argument becomes discredited or diminished solely because a similar idea was practiced or promoted by the NSDAP or Hitler regardless of the point the argument makes.

You can see this fallacy appear in U.S. discussions online about immigration enforcement by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Border Patrol. In 2026 during operations in Minneapolis, critics and media commentators compared ICE agents to Gestapo, where they say that some of the agents appeared in long, double breasted great coats with brass buttons. Progressive critics argued that the coat appeared like Nazi or SS uniform, while enforcement tactics and isolated uses of force fuelled the belief that ICE agents "are literally Nazis" [22]. In logical terms, this demonstrates the fallacy of Reductio ad Hitlerum, because arguments dismiss ICE's mandate of carrying out immigration enforcement.

The absurdity of this fallacy occurs when it is applied to policies that are morally or practically unobjectionable. For example, the National Socialists implemented strict animal welfare laws [23], so any modern proposal for strict animal welfare laws must be shut down and rejected "because Hitler did it" or that the idea is inherently "Fascist". Thus, the Reductio ad Hitlerum fallacy collapses into its own Reductio ad Absurdum, where if carried to its logical conclusion, it would require us to reject various other policies the National Socialists practiced, such as vegetarianism, traffic laws, or public health initiatives.

In the context of this dissertation, Reductio ad Hitlerum demonstrates that any discussion about uncensored representation of National Socialist iconography can get shut down before any rational analysis can occur.

2.2.2 Godwin's Law

Godwin's Law, which was formulated by Mike Godwin in 1990, is a direct internet era use of the Reductio ad Hitlerum fallacy. It states that; "as an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Hitler or the Nazis approaches 1" (Mike Godwin 1990) [24]. Originally it was used humorously to highlight the deterioration of rational discourse, the theory however has seen its practical use in debates and has been observed repeatedly.

Godwin's Law is routinely illustrated regarding the discussions around the censorship of National Socialist iconography in video games. For example, online forums debating whether World War II symbols like the Swastika should be uncensored to preserve historical accuracy, and within a few replies - the debate would be severely escalated to the point where users would start accusing people that; "Wanting to present the Swastika uncensored means you are literally defending Nazis" or that, "This is just revisionism and Holocaust denial so you must be a Nazi". These such comparisons trivialise historical atrocities and totalitarian regimes, which then pins the recipient as the "ultimate evil" for simply wanting uncensored symbols to achieve historical accuracy.

2.2.3 The Streisand Effect

The Streisand Effect describes a phenomenon where attempts to remove, hide, or censor information paradoxically increases public attention or awareness to it [25]. This theory was named after Barbra Streisand's failed 2003 lawsuit to suppress photos of her home, this effect is also well documented and prevalent in digital media. In video games, this effect appears when there are efforts to remove, replace, or alter National Socialist symbols which often achieves the opposite and unintended result; widespread media coverage, player outrage, and surges in uncensored video game mods for the symbol specifically. This goes to show that censorship can paradoxically increase curiosity, which also defeats the purpose of censorship in the first place.

2.2.4 Reactance Theory

Reactance Theory is a theory which was proposed by Jack Brehm in 1966, the theory argues that perceived threats to people's behavioural freedoms makes them

experience a state of psychological reactance which makes them want to reclaim said freedoms [26]. When this is applied to censorship, the theory argues that heavily sanitising National Socialist symbols makes them more psychologically desirable or intriguing. In the context of video games, players who notice the suppression of these symbols may turn to game modification to seek out uncensored versions, which like the previous theory, defeats the whole point of censorship.

2.2.5 Double Standards, Victor's Justice and Selective Censorship

Some complexity arises from voices which highlight a perceived “Victor’s Justice” [27] - which is the idea that the Allied victors of the Second World War established legal and moral standards that disproportionately stigmatize National Socialist symbols while also treating similar symbols like the Hammer and Sickle of Communist ideology more leniently.

For context, the Hammer and Sickle (see Figure 2.17) which was the main emblem of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or CCCP in Russian), was also responsible for the deaths of tens of millions (there are some arguments of up to 100 million deaths) through famine, democide, purges, and forced slave labour [28], including atrocities such as the Holodomor (3.5 - 7 million deaths) [29], Katyn Massacre (~22,000 poles executed) [30], and in China with Mao’s Great Leap Forward (15 - 55 million deaths) [31]. The Hammer and Sickle symbol widely stays permitted with its use in video games, and films.

The Hammer and Sickle (Figure 2.17) [32]:



Game titles featuring Soviet forces routinely feature the symbol on flags, uniform, and vehicles without triggering the intense scrutiny and media backlash like symbols from the NSDAP. An example of the Hammer and Sickle in use is in the video game *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* (2020), where the symbol not only appears on flags, but is a

weapon the player can use to kill players in its multiplayer game mode (see Figure 2:18). For contrast, games featuring the Swastika are routinely encouraged or required by law to remove, replace or alter the symbols to avoid accusations of glorification and media backlash.

The Hammer and Sickle weapon in *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* (Figure 2.18) [33]:



The inconsistencies apply to legal frameworks regarding historical denial, where most European countries criminalise Holocaust denial under laws that treat denial as a threat to public order. This perceived double standard appears with equivalent denial of historical atrocities such as the Holodomor, Bengal famine, Firebombing of Japan, Colonial exploitations, the Great Leap Forward, and so on, where such denial faces far less legal, social, or cultural backlash. This selective censorship raises valid questions whether censorship laws and policies are influenced by who the victors were in 1945.

These perceived double standards challenge claims of consistent, ethical, and principled censorship. It suggests that National Socialism may be a unique evil compared to the equal or greater scale of deaths under similar regimes and nations.

2.2.6 Terminology and Historical Name Confusion

A further example of potential confusion is with the widespread use of the term “Nazi” rather than the official party name of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), or when referring to people - “National Socialists.” The term “Nazi” originated as a derogatory word used early by the regime’s opponents in the 1920s to 1930s, it was further popularised with its casual and formal usage by the Allied Powers in the Second World War. In the modern day, the word is universally used in games, media, animation, discussions and films, almost always in place of its correct historical name.

This, however, is not a unique phenomenon. It has been observed throughout history, a parallel being the common reference in discussion of the “Byzantine Empire,” a term that was never used by the Romans themselves; the Romans referred to their state as the “Eastern Roman Empire.” The label “Byzantine Empire” was coined centuries later by Western Historians [34].

These naming conventions illustrate how incorrect usage of terminology can subtly shape public understanding, which could potentially reinforce emotionally charged or simplified perceptions of historical regimes.

Chapter 3: Case Studies

3.1 Selective censorship in *Call of Duty: WWII* (2017)

An example of inconsistent censorship appears in the video game title *Call of Duty: WWII* (Sledgehammer Games, 2017). In a single cutscene during the games campaign game mode, the game presents both censored and uncensored Swastika symbols.

At the timestamp 0:57 (see Video 3.1), an armband on a German officer features an Iron Cross (see Figure 3.1), however just a second later at timestamp 0:58, a large NSDAP Reich War flag with a giant Swastika appears dangling over a stairway (see Figure 3.2), which is completely unmissable, and later on there is more censorship on documents featuring the NSDAP eagle at timestamp 1:20 (see Figure 3.3).

The contradictions are best observed in the original video clip. Rapid transitions between small but censored armbands, and emblems to giant NSDAP war flags featuring a prominent Swastika illustrates the selective and arbitrary censorship in commercial video game titles.

Call of Duty: WWII gameplay video (Video 3.1) [35]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APQ88SZ1Suc>

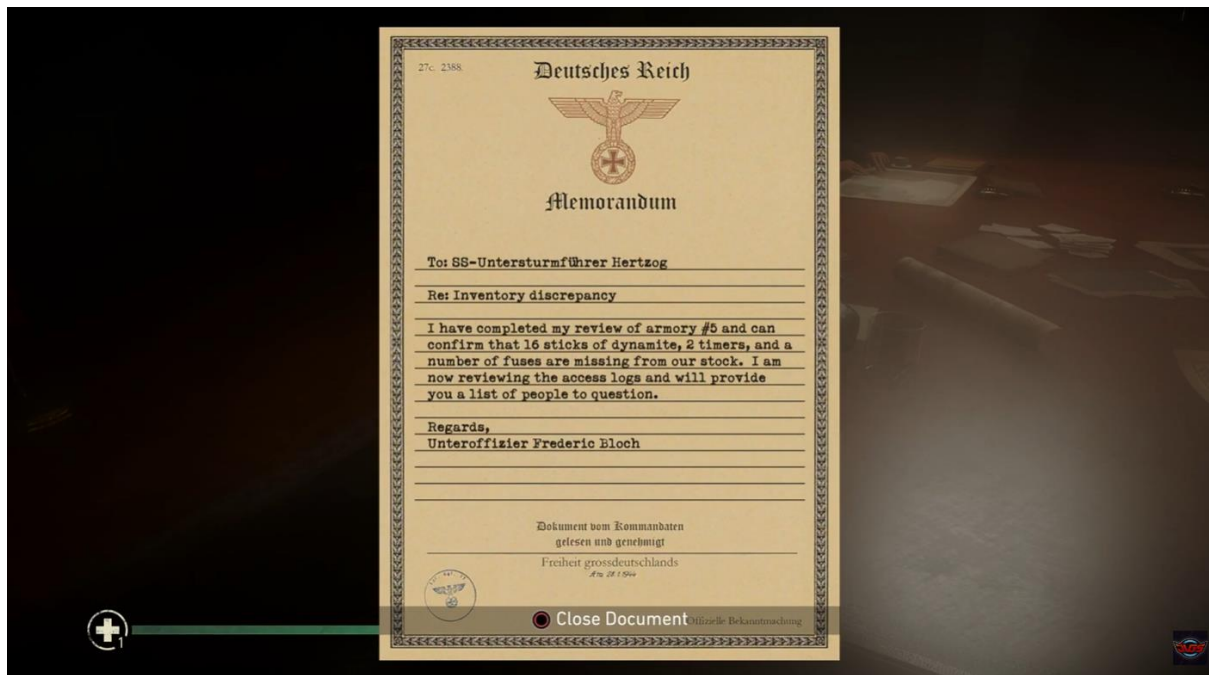
Armband, and Iron cross on chest (Figure 3.1) [35]:



NSDAP Reich War flag (Figure 3.2) [35]:



Iron cross on NSDAP eagle (Figure 3.3) [35]:



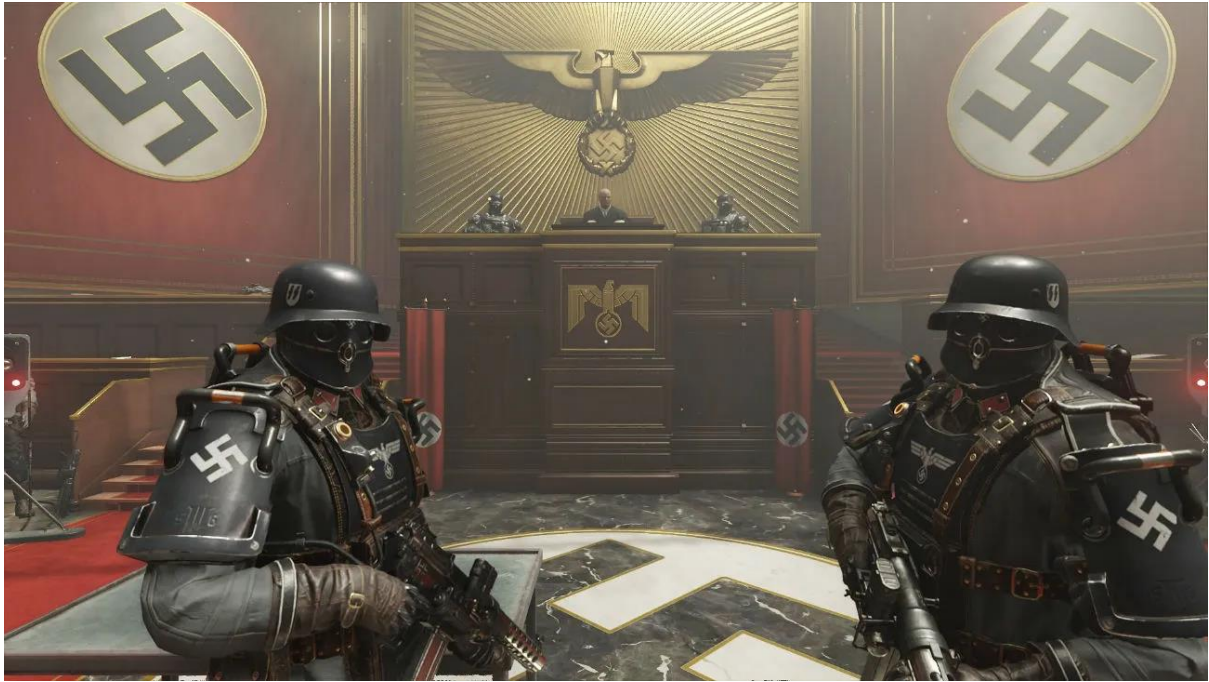
3.2 Censorship in *Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus* (2017)

The video game *Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus* (MachineGames, 2017) uses a different approach on the issues around National Socialist iconography compared to many other titles. This game prominently features Swastikas, SS runes and many other National Socialist symbols throughout its campaign (see Figure 3.4). These uncensored National Socialist symbols are often accompanied with depictions of the Ku Klux Klan uniforms (see Figure 3.5), as an over fascist narrative for its story.

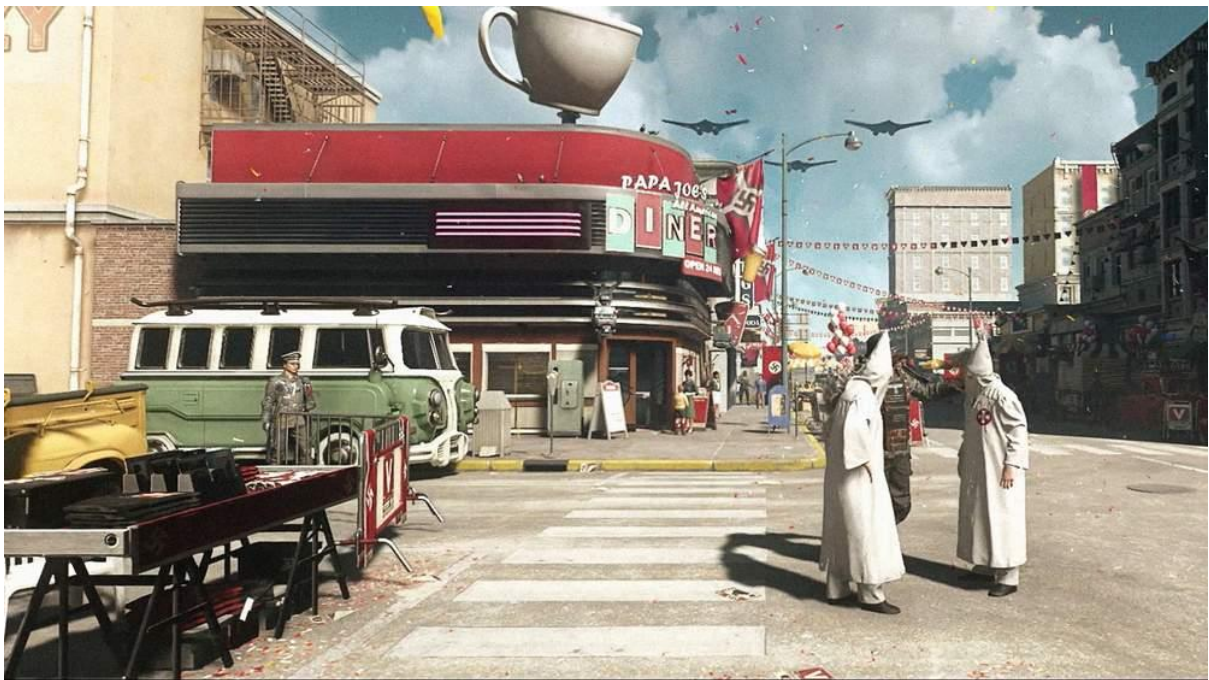
The usages of the uncensored symbols garnered significant media and public attention at its launch. The developers defended the uncensored use of the symbols as it was essential for the games thematic intent rather than promoting extreme politics.

However, in Germany, the game was subject to far stricter rules than other countries, this is because under §86a of the Criminal Code it bans “symbols of unconstitutional organisations,” which is why two separate versions of the game released; one version with minimal censorship which was the international version, and the other version being specifically for Germany where all NSDAP symbols are altered to comply with local laws. The symbol alteration used in Germany uses an unrecognisable symbol (see Figure 3.6). According to a BBC report, developers created two versions of the game because they were unsure whether the legal ban on the symbols would be lifted before the scheduled release (BBC 2017). In the studios official FAQ, they described the German version is “fully sanitized”. This highlights the practical impacts on legal frameworks during game development [36].

The Swastikas appearance in-game (Figure 3.4) [37]:



The Ku Klux Klan uniforms (Figure 3.5) [38]:



The Swastika, Totenkopf, and Eagle alteration, side by side (Figure 3.6) [36]:



3.3 *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) and Uncensored Iconography

In dissimilarity to many video game titles, films frequently display National Socialist iconography without censorship. *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) made by Quentin Tarantino is an excellent example. The primary antagonist of the film named “Hans Landa” has the role of not only being a National Socialist, but an ideologically motivated Schutzstaffel Colonel, as Hans Landa plays the role of an *SS-Standartenführer* (Colonel). Hans Landa is also known in the film as “The Jew Hunter” or “*Der Judenjäger*.” The National Socialist and SS symbols featured in this film appear completely uncensored and often appear frequently, and often quite prominently (see Figures 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9).

Because film is observed passively, the audience remains an observer rather than an active embodied role of Wehrmacht or Waffen-SS soldiers. This allows the director to use the symbols more openly as a symbol of totalitarianism and evil without the risks of player self-glorification that could arise from interactive games. The film unexpectedly gained widespread approval and was a commercial success around the globe, even in Germany it was a success. There were no significant regulations on the usage of National Socialist symbols like developers would face with video games.

This highlights a stark difference between passive and active observation of National Socialist iconography. Where media passively observed face far less scrutiny than when a player embodies the active role.

Considering the vast differences between interactive and passive media, it seems that developers are required to remove symbols on characters and the player character to

avoid players role-playing as National Socialists, and to prevent extremists from glorifying themselves as National Socialists.

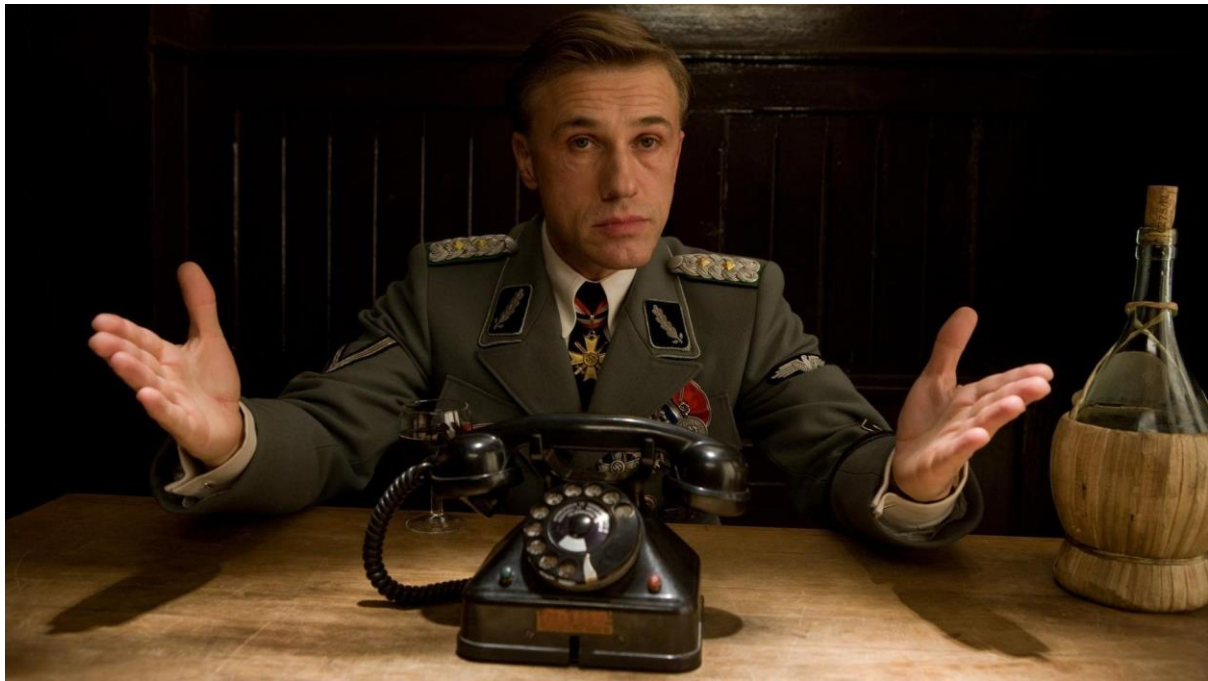
The Swastika in the film (Figure 3.7) [39]:



The Totenkopf in the film (Figure 3.8) [40]:



The SS Uniform (Figure 3.9) [41]:



3.4 Chilean Army Parade and Historical Uniform Choices

A further example of historical uniforms and sensitivities in the modern day appear in the Chilean Army's Ceremonial Uniform (see Figure 3.10), which is best observed in their parades (see Video 3.2). The soldiers in these ceremonial parades wear Prussian to Weimar Republic era uniforms that predates the NSDAP. Viewers unfamiliar with military history - these Prussian uniforms bear a great resemblance to Wehrmacht uniform worn during National Socialist Germany.

The modern Bundeswehr purposefully avoids using the black Waffen-SS or grey Wehrmacht uniforms of the Third Reich because of their association with crimes against humanity. Instead, the Bundeswehr wear modified but Prussian inspired uniforms to distance itself from the dictatorship of NSDAP Germany in 1933 – 1945, primarily to reflect democratic values rather than unconstitutional organisations.

However, this approach stands in direct opposition to the common practices adopted by almost every country globally, by dressing in ceremonial and or historical units in uniforms of their perceived "height of national power." Famous examples include; British Redcoat uniform (see Figure 3.11) as a reflection of their height of the British Empire, and Russian forces who wear their Second World War Era Soviet uniforms (see Figure 3.12).

These decisions highlight perceived inconsistencies in usage of historically controversial uniforms which extends beyond video games into real world military traditions. It underscores the selective censorship of historical symbolism and reinforces the central question whether censorship of historically controversial historical symbolism and or uniforms is truly justified.

Chilean Parade uniform (Figure 3.10) [42]:



Chilean Army Parade video (Video 3.2) [42]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3Y3-p11yNM>

British Redcoat Uniform (Figure 3.11) [43]:



Russian Parade Uniform (Figure 3.12) [44]:



Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter details the methodology employed to address the research question, and a detailed breakdown on the approach for the creation of a 1:1 1930s Berlin Germany street leading up to the Brandenburg Gate. By building a historically accurate and uncensored environment in a non-interactive context, it enables critical examination on the use of uncensored historically controversial symbols.

The following sections will describe the research for the designs, research gathering, the technical pipeline of the project, and the ethical considerations regarding the project's sensitive topic.

4.1 Research Approach

In this practice led research, a creation of an original artefact is essential at demonstrating and addressing the core research question.

The primary research instrument for this project is a 1:1 reconstruction of the Unter den Linden Street in Berlin Germany during the 1930s leading up to and slightly past the Brandenburg Gate. This controlled historically accurate reconstruction of Unter den Linden is to test whether uncensored presentation of National Socialist iconography can serve historical purposes without risks of glorification or censorship as seen in many game titles.

Historical reference material informed and helped with the modelling process, with reference images to show and help guide with the creation of this historically accurate scene.

4.2 Historical Reference Materials

The reconstruction used a variety of primary reference materials of Unter den Linden, Berlin in NSDAP Germany. The core materials used for reference consist of 1930s Propaganda Reels of Unter den Linden leading up to the Brandenburg Gate. 22 High resolution images and some screenshots pulled from a 1930s Propaganda Reel (see Video 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3) helped shape the core layout and designs of the 1:1 reconstruction, however some guessing/estimation had to be made for buildings where I couldn't find perfect angles or orthographic views, so the buildings may not be 100% identical to their historic counterparts.

These screenshots provide a great amount of detail which helped design the street layout, buildings block out, the Brandenburg Gate, statues, and various other minor details (see Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, 4.19, and 4.20).

The key design influence of the architecture was from the grand architectural philosophy by the Third Reich Architect Albert Speer.
All designs in this project were heavily influenced by Alber Speer's design philosophy.

Propaganda Reel 1 (Video 4.1) [45]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkXPD92Fg2c>

Propaganda Reel 2 (Video 4.2) [46]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKu4QJ6voD4>

Propaganda Reel 3 (Video 4.3) [47]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nB8loKw-xs>

(Figure 4.1) [45]:



(Figure 4.2) [45]:



(Figure 4.3) [45]:



(Figure 4.4) [45]:



(Figure 4.5) [45]:



(Figure 4.6) [45]:



(Figure 4.7) [45]:



(Figure 4.8) [45]:



(Figure 4.9) [45]:



(Figure 4.10) [45]:



(Figure 4.11) [45]:



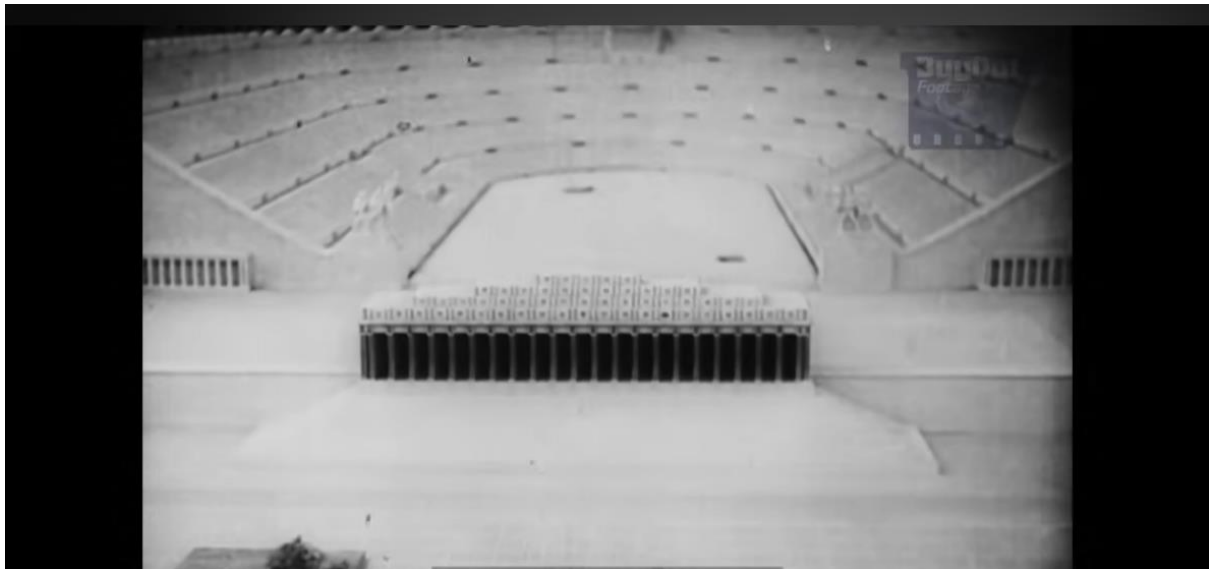
(Figure 4.12) [46]:



(Figure 4.13) [45]:



(Figure 4.14) [47]:



(Figure 4.15) [47]:



(Figure 4.16) [47]:



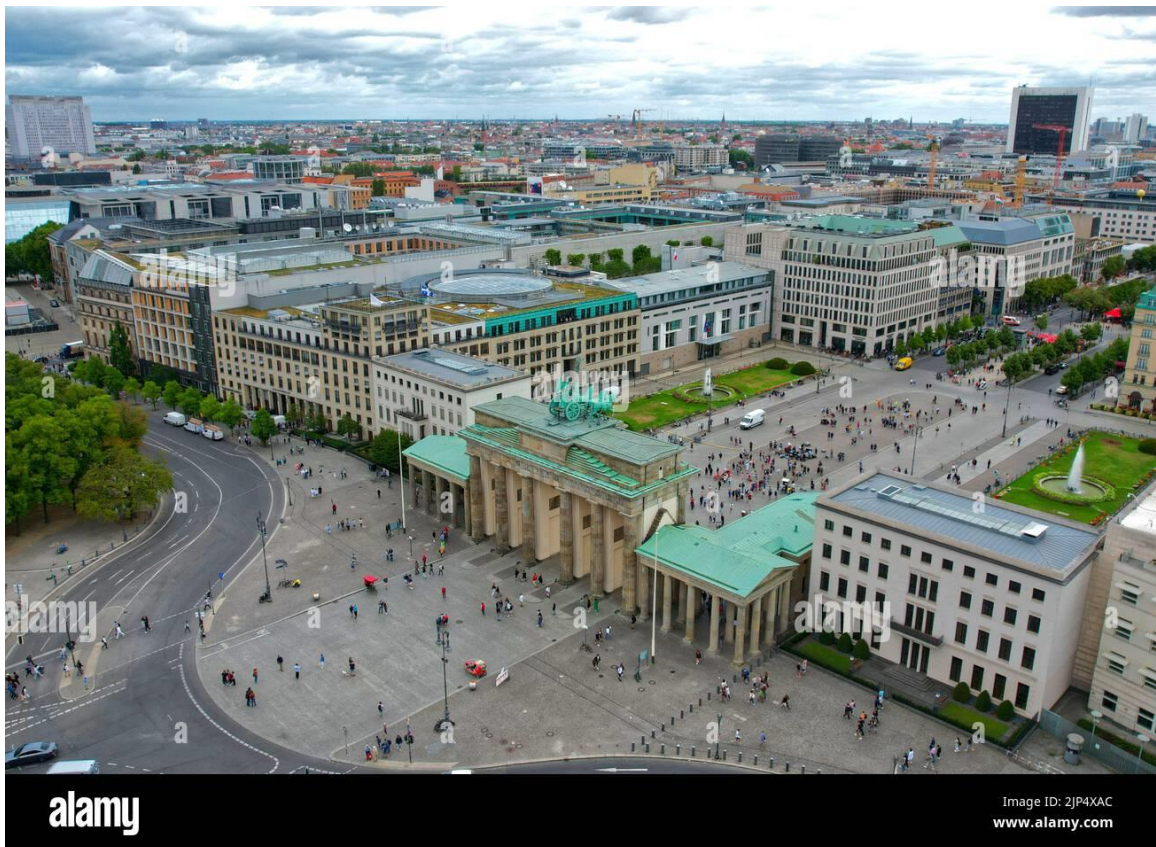
(Figure 4.17) [48]:



(Figure 4.18) [49]:



(Figure 4.19) [50]:



(Figure 4.20) [51]:



A brief rundown on Albert Speer (see Figure 4.21) below:

Alber Speer (Figure 4.21) [52]:



“Berthold Konrad Hermann Albert Speer (19 March 1905 – 1 September 1981) was a German Architect who served as Minister of Armaments and War Production in National Socialist Germany during most of World War II. A close friend and ally of Adolf Hitler, he was convicted at the Nuremberg Trials and served 20 years in prison.

An Architect by training, Speer joined the NSDAP in 1931. His architectural skills made him increasingly prominent within the Party, and he became a member of Hitler’s inner circle. Hitler commissioned him to design and construct structures, including the Reich Chancellery and the NSDAP rally grounds in Nuremberg [52]. (Wikipedia)”

4.3 Modelling and Texturing Pipeline

The modelling and texturing workflow was designed to keep historical accuracy and help me keep on track throughout the project. To manage the use of a large amount of assets throughout the project, I used a Gantt chart (see Figure 4.24) to help me keep notes of my progress throughout the project, the design process used industry grade software for the highest possible quality to achieve realism.

Gantt Chart and Progress as of 29th April 2026 (Figure 4.24):

	A	B	C
1	Assets	Priority	Progress
2	Pavement	High	100%
3	Road	High	100%
4	Island	Medium	100%
5	Flag1	High	100%
6	FlagAlt1	Medium	0%
7	Flag2	Medium	0%
8	Floor	High	100%
9	Statue1	High	100%
10	Statue2	Medium	75%
11	FlagAlt2	Low	0%
12	Column	High	100%
13	Gate1	Very High	0%
14	Building1	Very High	0%
15	FlagPole1	Low	100%
16	Blockout	High	100%
17	Building2	Medium	0%
18	Statue3	High	0%
19	Eagle1	Medium	0%
20	Eagle2	Medium	0%
21	GrassFloor	Very High	100%
22	Grass	High	100%
23	Trees	Very High	0%
24	Lampost1	Medium	100%
25	Bench	Low	0%
26	People	Low	0%
27	Cars	Low	0%
28	Gate2	High	0%
29	Bush	Low	0%
30	FlagPole2	Low	0%
31	Lampost2	Medium	0%
32	Flag3	Low	0%
33	Statue4	Medium	0%

The modelling was done through the software Autodesk Maya. Each model such as Buildings, Roads, Statues, Columns, Lampposts, Grass, Trees, Flags, Flag poles, Benches, and so on were individually modelled as separate assets to give full control on asset placement throughout the scene. There was a particular focus on aiming for the monumental scale of the buildings to evoke the feeling of individual insignificance too.

The texturing was done with the use of Adobe Substance Painter. High resolution PBR smart materials were used to achieve realistic looking textures, the texturing was based on the original historical designs from 1930s Berlin.

This pipeline ensures that it keeps historical accuracy using historical references to shape the 1:1 reconstruction of Unter den Linden.

4.4 Unreal Engine 5 scene assembly

In the final stage of the pipeline, it involved assembling all the assets that have been created and placing them in ways that match the historical references in the 1930s.

Each individual asset had texture maps applied to in the material hierarchy.

The lighting and clouds were also taken into account with the creation of this scene, clouds were manipulated to appear overcast as how it appeared in the references, and lighting was adjusted to appear dim. Both of which help immensely with the psychological effect of individual insignificance when the player is confronted with grand architecture an aesthetic of which was informed by Reich Architect Albert Speer.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

With the topic of this dissertation and practical aspect of the project using uncensored National Socialist symbols, it raised some ethical considerations for the project. This project was conducted with full compliance with the University's ethics policies. An ethics form was submitted and formally approved confirming supervisor oversight and approval.

The inclusions of National Socialist iconography were strictly done for historical and educational purposes only. The final artifact is non interactive to explore questions on censorship and historical accuracy. With the final artifact being non interactive, it features no gameplay from which there can be no glorification or promotion from. All symbols appear within a controlled environment and in the context of a 1930s historical environment.

Ethics Form Link:

[SoAC Ethics Form - Jared Nickson 1.docx](#)

4.6 Limitations with the Methodology

There were some minor limitations with the creation of this historically accurate scene of the 1930s Unter den Linden street. As I was relying solely on Propaganda Reels the National Socialists filmed themselves, I had limited orthographic images to work with when modelling the assets. So, this scene may not be 100% accurate compared to how it was in real life.

Chapter 5: Analysis

The analysis will cover a side-by-side comparison of assets compared to their historical counterparts. As the practical part of the project is due much later than this dissertation, the scene is still incomplete so I will have limited images to compare with.

5.1: My Work

In the reconstruction it demonstrates a high level of architectural accuracy in the completed sections of the scene. A great example is the monumental statues positioned up and down the Unter den Linden street. Figure 5.1 presents my own work with a side-by-side comparison to the real-life counterpart Figure 4.4:

My work (Figure 5.1):



Sanitized Version of my work (Figure 5.2):



The statue in real life (Figure 4.4) [45]:



The overall shape, its proportions and its texturing and the placement of the big golden swastika wreath closely resembles that of the real-life counterpart. However, minor details on the wreath such as the indentations, and the size of the bowls on top, are something to keep in mind if I were to redo this asset at some point in the future.

The Sanitised version of the model with blue flags appears far different to the original model. This could play into colour theory where Red presents a bold, aggressive, or

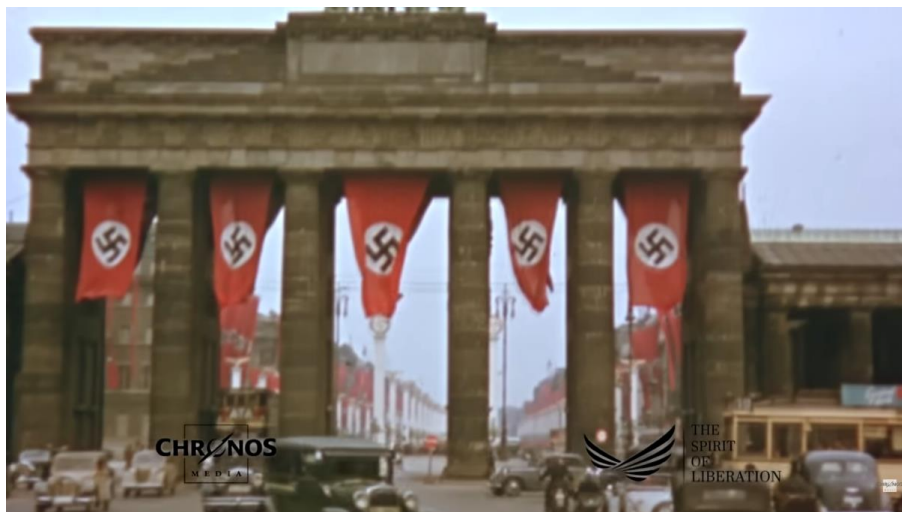
authority. Blue is a greater sanitised version of the flag design as blue in colour theory presents trust, stability, and intelligence. It isn't as striking as the bold and bright red colour [53], [54].

Below are some side-by-side examples of the scene compared to real life. The scene is still unfinished, so there is still quite a bit missing

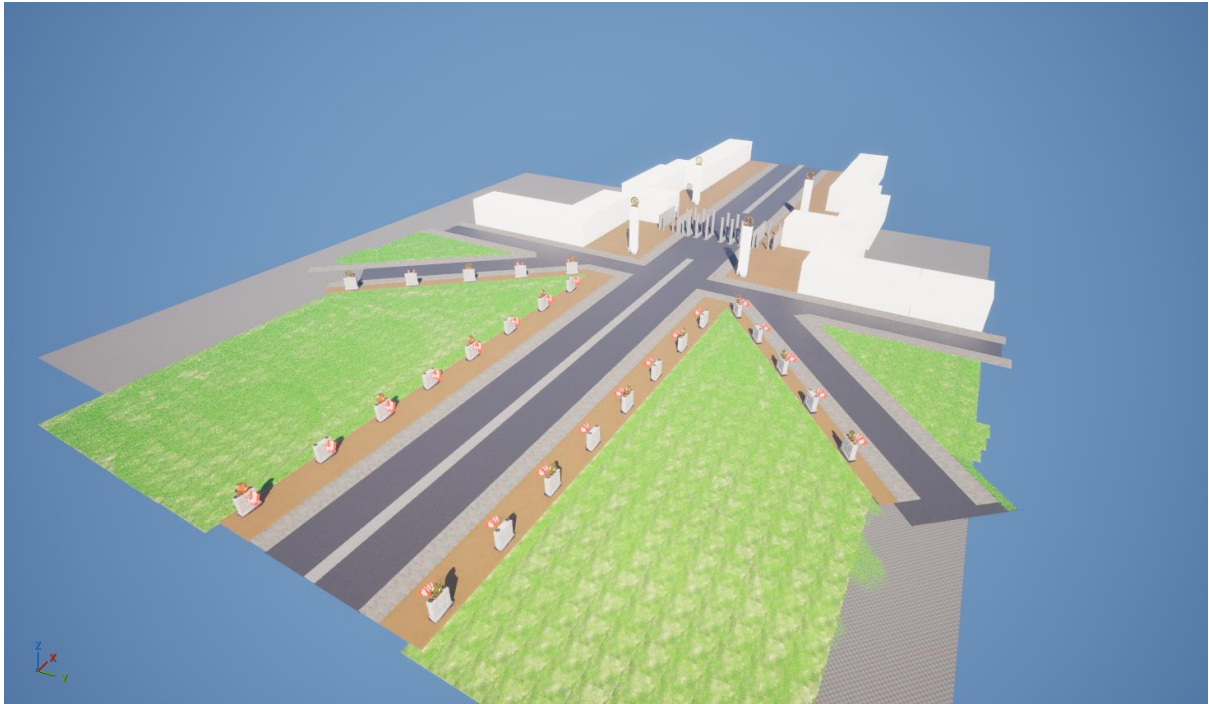
My Brandenburg Gate layout (Unfinished (Figure5.3)):



And how it looked in real life (Figure 4.5) [45]:



The whole block out of my scene (Figure 5.4):



And the street layout in real life (Figure 4.20) [51]:



Chapter 6: Evaluation

This chapter evaluates the whole dissertation and practical work of the project, it will also conclude with a final answer to the research question; To what extent is the censorship of historically controversial symbols (those associated with National Socialism) justified or beneficial in modern educational, gaming, or media contexts?

6.1: What Went Well?

Overall, the completed sections of the practical successfully demonstrate the visual and psychological impact of grand architecture inspired by Albert Speer. The strong emphasis on scale of the architecture creates a strong sense of individual insignificance when viewed from street level. I believe it perfectly captures the essence of a totalitarian regime with the use of imposing architecture.

6.2: Answer to the Research Question

With the vast evidence gathered from the Literature Review and the Case Studies, the research strongly points towards the position that censorship of historically controversial symbols like those of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, is **Not always justified or beneficial** in modern educational, gaming, or media contexts.

Reason being, that censorship is applied inconsistently which has been observed in commercial titles like *Call of Duty: WWII* (2017) where the swastika appears censored on clothing, but the swastika appears uncensored on the Reich War Flag, and the relative tolerance of Communist symbols - such as the Hammer and Sickle weapon (*Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* (2020)) example in Chapter 2.2.5 which suggests that current practices in gaming contexts are more shaped by legal restrictions imposed after the defeat of NSDAP Germany in 1945 and historical contingency which is often described as "Victor's Justice" rather than ethical or harm-based concerns.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation examined whether the censorship of historically controversial symbols, primarily focusing on National Socialist iconography, is justified or beneficial in modern educational, gaming, or media contexts. With practice-led research and a creation of a 1:1 replica of the 1930s Unter den Linden Street leading up to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, NSDAP Germany.

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